

XXII.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

Little Ringed Plover in the Balearic Isles.

SIR,—Until March, 1921, this species apparently had not been recorded from Majorca, for v. Jordans had not observed it and only quoted Homeyer writing of it as the rarest plover, and some general remarks about it.

In 1920 I sent to the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain some eggs I obtained here, which closely resembled Little Ringed Plovers', but from which I had certainly identified the birds as Kentish Plovers. Mr. Jourdain at once questioned the identification of these eggs, but I was able to assure him that, without doubt, the birds from these nests were Kentish Plovers.

I had hoped to find the Little Ringed Plover here, and looked for it carefully, but in 1920 not a single bird of this species was seen in the district; nor until March 1921 did I observe any, when, as I have stated in the "Birds of Alcudia" (Ibis, 1921, p. 712), a few small parties passed through the district, but I do not think that more than three pairs remained to nest; and one of these pairs, whose nest I found on the unusually early date of 16 March, in the area affected by the Kentish Plovers, entirely disappeared after their eggs were taken. The two other pairs nested in a locality quite outside that where the Kentish Plovers breed.

To make sure that my identification of the eggs, which Mr. Bunyard questions, was correct; in one instance, where the nest contained two eggs only, so closely resembling Little Ringed Plovers' that I hoped they might belong to that species, I left them for some days in order that more might be laid, and that I might have more opportunities of identifying the birds; I was able, therefore, daily to put the bird off its eggs, and to make sure to which species it belonged. There was not the least doubt that it was a Kentish Plover, and it was quite unnecessary to shoot it, as it is comparatively tame at its nest, while the Little Ringed Plover is quite the opposite.

It does not appear to me possible that Kentish Plovers should appropriate the eggs of Little Ringed Plovers, as this was not a solitary instance, for altogether five nests of these eggs which Mr. Bunyard questions were found in 1920, and yet not a single Little Ringed Plover was observed in the district in that year.

Messrs. Jourdain and Witherby were quite justified in assuming that these eggs, which so closely resemble Little Ringed Plovers', were Kentish Plovers', because of my assurance to the former that they belonged to that species, and neither Mr. Witherby nor any observer had recorded the Little Ringed Plover from this island before 1921.

PHILIP W. MUNN.

Puerto Alcudia,

Majorca.

30 January, 1922.

SIR,—When I exhibited the eggs of the Kentish Plover taken by Captain P. W. Munn in 1920, which closely resembled those of the Lesser Ringed Plover, no nests or eggs of the latter species had ever been found on the island although Capt. Munn had searched carefully for them. In 1921 he discovered two pairs and was at once struck by the dissimilarity of the notes and habits of the two species.

As Mr. Bunyard frankly admits that he has never seen the Lesser Ringed Plover or its nest, and that his knowledge of the eggs is based solely on specimens obtained by purchase or exchange, it is difficult to see how his opinion can carry any weight when opposed to that of experienced field naturalists who are well acquainted with both species. It has now been proved by the observations of reliable ornithologists that the Kentish Plover occasionally lays eggs of the type normally associated with the Lesser Ringed Plover, and also that the Lesser Ringed Plover lays eggs spotted and streaked with black like those of the Kentish Plover.

Ground-building birds, when kept off their eggs for any length of time, may for brief periods brood eggs of other

species till driven off by the rightful owners, but such cases are quite exceptional and no field worker is likely to be misled by them. The statement that the Bar-tailed Godwit "will brood the eggs of the Whimbrel" rests on the statement of a dealer-collector, which is in all probability correct; it is, however, not a well-known habit but a quite exceptional occurrence.

If Mr. Bunyard's arguments are to be taken seriously we may look forward to statements in 'The Ibis' that the blue type of egg of the Spotted Flycatcher is really that of the Pied Flycatcher; or that blue eggs of the Blackbird are really those of the Thrush. Authenticity in future must not depend on the incubating bird, but will be settled by reference to a small series of normal eggs selected by Messrs. Schlüter and Kürickeldorff, and field work in Oology will become superfluous.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

Appleton Rectory.

6 February, 1922.

Illogical Rules of Nomenclature.

SIR,—The subject of Zoological Nomenclature is world-wide, therefore we should well ventilate world-wide opinions thereon. Nevertheless, the subject is somewhat unimportant. It has, in certain quarters, been boomed into one of great importance. Indeed non-scientific Rules have been boomed so largely as to almost eclipse science itself—the science of Ornithology at all events.

Consequent upon the Great War the International Commission is defunct and may never more be revived, except perhaps as an English-speaking people's Commission. Therefore the Rules of the "International Commission" so-called are like useless police statutes without magistrates and police officers to administer them.

The time appears opportune to make changes in the rules, especially those that are mischievous, or do not work smoothly, or are irritating to practical workers.

'The Ibis' was good enough to publish a letter of mine on the fallacy of absolute bed-rock priority instead of in some cases an *authoritative* name *. May I venture to follow on with the "pre-occupied" name, so-called, or Article 36. This is a mischievous rule.

That a pre-occupied name, if in use cannot be used for another species is sound common sense. The same name cannot logically be applied to two different species, at the same time.

But suppose the older (similar) name is obsolete—never now used—and is amongst the "bygones"—what then? There cannot possibly be any confusion in retaining the commonly current name for a well-known species, compared with the confusion caused by abolishing it in favour of some new name. Take for instance the Cassowary—*Casuarium australis*. It is extremely doubtful if that name ever was, but now never is, applied to the Emu (*Dromaius nova-hollandiae*), therefore it is as dead as Julius Cæsar and leaves but the one name *Casuarium australis* (for the Cassowary) in the world of knowledge to-day.

"Rejected homonyms can never be again used" literally means, that a name applied to describe one thing and the use of which to describe a second thing has been rejected, can never be used again.

Therefore the rule does not, in fact, cover the ground intended, but in the narrow interpretation which has been given to it, it goes much further than was ever intended.

By "narrow interpretation" I refer, for instance, to the strict ruling whereby a name which has been applied in an isolated case to describe a species in some remote age by some obscure writer, is by reason of such action rejected from application to another species though it may have been commonly used to refer to the later species by a number of writers over a very considerable period. That seems to me to be reducing a sound common-sense rule to an absurdity.

* 'The Ibis,' 1920, p. 510.

I would suggest that the rule be altered to read somewhat as follows :—

“ Where a name has been once recognized and is still in use as describing a particular genus or species, that name cannot be used to describe any other genus or species.”

There can be no occupation where no actual pre-occupation exists. Where no actual occupation occurs there cannot be, in point of fact, any homonym. A house cannot be occupied if no one lives therein.

Another mischievous rule. It is stated that “ an undeterminable name cannot be described and validated by any one.” Surely this is most arbitrary and contrary to the righteous spirit of priority. Because the history of the commonly used name is lost, why create a new one, if the old name has been properly described and validated *by usage* and in literature, say, for instance, the genus *Misocalius* in the British Museum “ Catalogues ”? * The thing is illogical. Extremists may protest, but in the long run they must submit to the final arbiter—*common usage* and *common sense*, especially where no legal aspect is involved, much less a scientific one.

Yours very obediently,

A. J. CAMPBELL,

Colonial Member B. O. U.
Honorary Fellow A. O. U.

Melbourne,
Australia.

7 January, 1922.

The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union.

The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union for 1922 was held on Wednesday, March 8, at the Offices of the Zoological Society of London, Mr. W. L. Sclater in the Chair.

There were 37 members present.

* Cat. Birds Brit. Mus. xix. p. 279.

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The recommendation of the Committee that "There being no member of the Committee with three years' service, in accordance with the decision of the 13th of May, 1921, no new members be appointed this year" was carried unanimously after the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, who raised the question, had been informed that the Committee had agreed that Dr. P. Lowe first, and then the present Committee in alphabetical order, should retire in accordance with the terms of the present rule.

The following Foreign Members were elected Honorary Members :—

Prof. Dr. A. J. Einar Lönnberg, F.M.Z.S. (Sweden).
Herluf Winge, C.M.Z.S. (Denmark).

The following were elected Foreign Members :—

Baron R. C. Snouckaert van Schauburg.
Mons. Louis Lavauden.
Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood.
Mr. W. de Witt Miller.
Dr. E. Lehn Schiøler.

The following Ordinary Member was elected Colonial Member :—

Major Allan Brooks.

The Chairman then called upon the Secretary to read the Report of the Committee for 1921, viz. :—

"The Committee have to report that during the year 1921 they have been able to reduce the adverse balance of £190 to £88, but they regret that they are still unable to consider the financial position to be in any way satisfactory.

"The raising of the subscription to £2 per annum has been well received, as may be seen by the steady increase in the strength of our membership. A few members still continue to pay only £1 or £1 5s., but these do not receive 'The Ibis' and merely continue to remain as members of

the Union. There have been very few resignations on account of the increase in the subscription, but, on the other hand, the Committee regret that there have been a considerable number of resignations due to the fact that members have, owing to the present amount of taxation and the general depression in money matters, cancelled their membership from all Scientific Societies including our own.

“The Committee feel that it is still very necessary for members to assist in bringing forward suitable candidates for election, and it is only by increasing our membership that we shall eventually be able to furnish the funds which are necessary for so many desirable objects, chief amongst which they would mention the publication of the ‘*Systema Avium*.’

“The present volume of ‘*The Ibis*’ is the sixty-third, and is the third of the Eleventh Series. It contains only 799 pages as against 1022 in the previous year, and it is illustrated with only two coloured plates, seven uncoloured, and four text-figures. The comparative cost is, unfortunately, even higher than in 1920, the actual reduction being only about £85. In 1922 we hope to see a real reduction, although the cost of printing, both letterpress and plates, is not following the general rapid decrease of costs in other trades.

“The Committee regret to report the deaths of the following:—

Ordinary Members :

Dr. W. S. Bruce.	Col. H. W. Feilden.
H. M. Upcher.	Col. W. W. C. Verner.
Col. R. G. Wardlaw-Ramsay.	

Honorary Members :

Dr. V. Bianchi.	Dr. J. A. Allen.	J. Macoun.
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Foreign Member :

S. Alpheraky.

“The following gentlemen have resigned :—

C. F. Archibald.	H. R. Munt.
J. C. Baker.	S. A. Neave.
Hon. R. Bethell.	H. Parker.
A. H. Cocks.	W. H. Patterson.
Dr. H. N. Coltart.	Col. R. H. Rattray.
J. B. Dobbie.	Capt. R. C. Staples-
P. E. Freke.	Browne.
Earl of Gainsborough.	G. S. Steward.
O. Grabham.	Col. R. W. Studdy.
H. E. Harris.	A. Thorburn.
R. J. Howard.	H. S. Watt.

“The membership of the Union is given in comparison with the last five years :—

	1922.	1921.	1920.	1919.	1918.	1917.
Ordinary Members...	446	423	418	418	423	416
Extraordinary „ ...	1	1	1	1	1	1
Honorary „ ...	8	9	9	7	8	9
Hon. Lady „ ...	8	8	8	8	8	9
Colonial „ ...	9	10	10	9	9	10
Foreign „ ...	17	16	16	13	20	19

“There are 28 candidates for ordinary membership, and the Committee regret that there is not a very much larger number.

“As you have already been informed in the notice convening the meeting, the Committee, on your behalf, are presenting to-day to Dr. W. Eagle Clarke the Godman-Salvin Medal in recognition of the splendid work he has done in reference to migration.”

Mr. F. J. Waydelin, remarking on the resignations, suggested that a number of members had resigned and certain persons had also objected to joining the Union for the reason that large numbers of eggs had been exhibited at meetings (*vide* the Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club) which was contrary to Rule 7 of the Union.

The Hon. Secretary explained that this matter had already been brought to the notice of the Committee who were dealing with the subject. Further, that the Union were not responsible for the actions of the British Ornithologists' Club, although the members of the latter were all members of the Union.

In reply to a member, the Hon. Secretary stated that the amounts shown as returned subscriptions on the Balance-sheet were duplicate payments on account of the non-cancellation of old Bankers' Orders.

The Report and Balance-sheet were then approved and passed.

The recommendation of the Committee that "Members be permitted to compound their subscriptions on the following scale:—

	£	s.
Members under 45 years of age	35	0
" of 45 to 50 " 	32	10
" " 50 to 55 " 	30	0
" " 55 to 60 " 	25	0
" " over 60 " 	20	0 "

was discussed and approved after an agreement was reached to insert in the new rule a proviso that the capital so obtained should be invested and only the income used as revenue. The Committee were authorized to formulate a rule for submission to a General Meeting at some future date.

The Committee's recommendation that

"Vice-Presidents, two in number, shall be elected
"annually, but any member so elected shall not be
"eligible for re-election to the Vice-Presidentship in
"the year following his retirement"

was carried *nem. con.*, and Mr. W. L. Sclater and Lord Rothschild were unanimously elected to the new Vice-Presidentships. This will necessitate the alteration of Rule 11 to read as follows:—

"The business of the British Ornithologists' Union
"shall be conducted by a Committee consisting of the
"President, two Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Editor

“of ‘The Ibis,’ and six members to be elected at the
 “Annual General Meeting. The Vice-Presidents shall
 “be elected annually, and no member so elected shall be
 “eligible for re-election to that Office in the year fol-
 “lowing his retirement, &c., &c.”

After Messrs. H. Kirke Swann and H. F. Witherby had been elected and had consented to act as Scrutineers, the following 28 candidates for Ordinary Membership were balloted for and duly elected :—

Wing-Commander Henry Le Marchant Brock, D.S.O.

Seabury Burdett-Coutts.

James Paul Chapin.

Denis Cox.

His Excellency Sir Percy Z. Cox, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I.,

K.C.M.G.

Robert Edward Jones Edwards.

Hubert Mortimer Eisdell.

Eric Evans.

Marjory Garnett (Miss).

Leslie Russell Alcock Gatehouse.

Charles Andrew Gladstone.

James Frederick Godman.

William Howard Powning Jonas.

Angus Peter Airlie Hamilton Kinloch, F.Z.S.

Pamela McKenna (Mrs. Reginald McKenna), J.P.

Thomas Marlow.

Charles Mosley.

Alice Hope Murton (Mrs.), M.B.E.

Frederick Marcus Oliphant.

Christopher John Pring.

Charles Herbert Roper.

Herbert Cecil Smith.

Samuel Findlater Stewart, C.I.E.

Bernard William Tucker.

Surgeon-Lieut.-Commander Walter Palmer Vicary, R.N.

Charles Francis Russell Nugent Weston.

Casey Albert Wood, M.D.

Charles Gore Young.

The decision of the Committee to present the Godman-Salvin Medal, instituted in memory of Dr. Godman and Mr. Salvin, and to be given from time to time for distinguished ornithological work, to Dr. W. Eagle Clarke, I.S.O., LL.D. (late President of the Union), was greeted with enthusiasm, and the Medal was duly presented by the Chairman, who gave a sketch of the extent of Dr. Eagle Clarke's researches in connection with bird-migration.

Dr. Eagle Clarke expressed his profound appreciation of the honour bestowed upon him, which, he stated, would form a deeply-valued recognition of many years of toil amidst statistics, and of days and nights spent in lighthouses, on islands, etc., devoted to bird-watching from which he had derived infinite pleasure.

Before the close of the Meeting the Chairman explained that the absence of the President was due to indisposition, which Mr. Elwes thought would necessitate his resignation from the Presidentship. The Committee had considered the matter and had agreed that the interests of the Union would be best served by his continuance in the Office of President for at least another year. The Meeting approved of this, and expressed the hope that Mr. Elwes's health would improve to enable him to continue the able discharge of his duties.

Captain H. S. Gladstone proposed and Dr. P. R. Lowe seconded a vote of thanks to the Zoological Society for the use of the Meeting Room.

Major A. G. L. Sladen proposed and Dr. H. Langton seconded a vote of thanks to Mr. H. Munt, the Auditor.

Dr. W. Eagle Clarke proposed and Mr. T. Iredale seconded a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

These were carried with acclamation.

The Annual Dinner after the Meeting was attended by considerably over 100 members, the guests of the evening being Dr. Eagle Clarke and Dr. de Beaufort, Hon. Secretary of the Netherlands Ornithologists' Union.

The McConnell collection of British Guiana birds.

This collection, which formed the basis of Mr. Chubb's two volumes on 'The Birds of British Guiana,' the second one of which has just appeared, was made by the late Mr. Frederick Vavasour McConnell when he was residing in that colony. It consists of about 7000 skins, representing over 700 species, and took some 25 years to collect. It has now been presented by his widow, Mrs. McConnell, to the Natural History Museum, and is one of the most valuable additions that have been made to the collection of birds in that institution for some time past.

Bird Sanctuaries in the London Parks.

Arrangements have recently been made by a committee appointed by H.M. Office of Works and presided over by Sir Lionel Earle, K.C.B., to form two small areas in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park into reserves suitable to encourage the nesting of small birds. This is chiefly to be effected by excluding gardeners, as well as the public, and allowing nature to take its own course in the matter of the growth of natural herbage and undergrowth. One of the enclosures is to the north of the Powder Magazine and contains in the centre greenhouses and potting-sheds concealed from public view. The other runs along the eastern side of the Serpentine between the bridge and the fountains. Whitethroats, Willow-Wrens, Hedge-Sparrows, Wagtails, and Sandpipers are all expected to take advantage of these enclosures.

Importation of bird-skins for scientific purposes.

From the Board of Trade we have received the following notice :—

“As from the 1st April, 1922, the importation into the United Kingdom of the plumage of birds not expressly excepted under the Act will be prohibited. The Board of Trade may, however, under Section 2 (4) of the Act ‘grant

to any person a licence subject to such conditions and regulations as they may think fit authorising the importation of plumage for any Natural History or other Museum, or for the purpose of scientific research or for any other special purpose.' ”

All applications for licences under this sub-section should be addressed to the Imports and Exports Licensing Section, Board of Trade, Great George Street, Westminster, S.W. 1.

Board of Trade,
7th February, 1922.

Personalia.

Mr. BATES writes on 30 October last that he has just returned from a journey through the inland parts of Cameroon, traversing the same region as did the German Expedition under Riggerbach of 1908. Mr. Bates reached a place called Genderu, his farthest point, but most of his collections were made on the high plateau of Tibati or in the neighbouring mountains. Tibati is marked in Stieler's Atlas; it is about 300 miles inland from Duala, the capital of Cameroon, in a north-easterly direction. He has sent home a collection of bird-skins and a few mammals, which will be examined and reported on by Mr. Bannerman, and there are likely to be some novel forms among them—at any rate, to English Ornithologists.

We learn that Captain HUBERT LYNES, R.N., and Mr. WILLOUGHBY LOWE are about to start on their homeward journey and expect to be in England early in May. They have been in Darfur since February 1920.

Mr. HUGH WHISTLER, of the Indian Police, writes us that since his return to India he has been stationed at Dharmsala, in the Kangra district of the Punjab. It is a most interesting district to the ornithologist, extending from the borders of Tibet to the plains of the Punjab, and he hopes to do some valuable work there. He has already secured some 700 skins and many eggs of considerable rarity.